

Job Sharing for Federal Employees



United States
Office of
Personnel
Management

Career Entry and
Employee
Development
Group

Office of
Staffing
Policy and
Operations

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United States
Department of

"When you have an engineer thinking about leaving to care for a new baby, you come up with alternatives really fast. In our case, the employee herself found a potential job sharing partner within the agency."

**Dennis Gagne, Chief
Contracts Management Section
Environmental Protection Agency
Boston**

Job Sharing for Federal Employees

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A Message to Managers

As we continue with new approaches to help Federal agencies fill jobs, I want to call your attention to part-time career employment and job sharing, two forms of flexible work arrangements increasingly available to Federal employees.

Recent studies on demographics of the workplace predict that as many as two-thirds of new entrants into the work force will be women, many of whom will be in their childbearing years. The majority of these new workers will undoubtedly do what most of today's workers do--handle home management responsibilities at the same time they hold down full-time jobs. Employers are recognizing, however, that some workers want reduced work schedules to make it easier for them to care for their families or pursue additional career-enhancing education. Many private sector firms now include part-time employment among the "family-oriented benefits" designed to attract new workers, particularly in highly competitive fields.

Legislation encouraging part-time employment for Federal employees has been in place since 1978; about 50,000 career employees--over 75% of whom are women--are now working on part-time schedules.

Governmentwide policy on part-time employment (Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 340) gives agencies the flexibility to decide where part-time positions best fit into the organization. In some cases, job sharing (filling one position with two part-time employees) enables management to staff a full-time position and also provide part-time schedules which would otherwise not be available. Further, since each job sharer may be able to work up to 32 hours per week, this approach allows for the accomplishment of extra work without costly overtime.

I urge each Federal manager to take a fresh look at this program to make sure your agency is using part-time and job sharing as effectively as possible to recruit and retain quality employees. We have prepared this publication, "Job Sharing for Federal Employees" to help you implement successful job sharing programs.

Constance Berry Newman

Job Sharing for Federal Employees

What is job sharing and how does it relate to part-time employment?

When two part-time employees voluntarily share the duties and responsibilities of a full-time position, the employees are job sharing. Generally, a job sharing team means two employees at the same grade level, but other arrangements are possible. Job sharers are part-time employees and are subject to personnel policies on that basis. See Appendix A for information about personnel policies.

Why should Federal agencies offer job sharing?

In today's shrinking labor market, employers recognize that more flexible work schedules are necessary to attract and maintain a quality workforce. Many workers, primarily but not exclusively women with child care or elder care responsibilities, do not want to maintain a full 40-hour schedule (plus commuting time and lunch breaks) for their entire career. Other individuals--those with health problems, with certain handicapping conditions, or who want to pursue other interests--are also interested in working on a reduced schedule. Job sharing is a way to permit employees to work part time in positions where full-time coverage is required.

How does job sharing benefit employers?

Public and private sector employers report job sharing serves many useful purposes in addition to recruiting and retaining employees who seek more flexibility in their work lives.

Scheduling Flexibility

Two people are available for one job and can be in different places at the same time. Job sharers can overlap during peak periods, can increase hours to handle extra workload, can trade work time to cover each other's absences, and can have schedules set to match workload flow (for example, early morning and late afternoon).

Job Enhancement

Two employees bring a wider range of skills to the job. In a Wisconsin State Government project, researchers found job sharers tended to supervise each other, catch errors, and exchange insights leading to better job performance.

Cost Savings

Job sharing offers an alternative to layoffs when full-time employees are willing to reduce hours. Overtime can be kept down if job sharers increase regularly scheduled hours. Job sharing cuts turnover of "burned out" employees and results in increased productivity from "fresher" employees.

What kind of jobs can be shared?

There is no definitive list of jobs "suitable" for job sharing, and no law or regulation limits part-time or job sharing to specific jobs or grade levels. Any job may be filled by a part-time employee or by a team of job sharers when the arrangement meets the needs of the agency and the employee(s). The State of Michigan found a key element in successful job sharing was not the particular set of duties, but the qualities of the job sharers themselves and the support they received from the organization.

Although it may be easier to visualize job sharing in positions which are project-oriented or have similar, repetitive tasks, experience in the private and public sectors has shown that job sharing is viable in all job categories. Federal agencies are already using job sharers in clerical, technical, administrative, professional, and supervisory positions.

In some situations, job sharing may not be appropriate, and agency managers will have excellent reasons for not approving requests for job sharing. However, this case-by-case approach is quite different from the outdated attitude that part-time employment and job sharing are "unacceptable" for consideration within a particular organization or unit.

Job sharing in positions requiring extensive pre-employment investigation or training will be more costly if the double costs are not offset over time.

How can an agency let employees know that job sharing is an option?

By law (5 U.S.C. 3402), nearly every Federal agency is required to have a program for part-time employment. It would be appropriate for agencies to incorporate references to job sharing in all materials relating to part-time employment. A special notice to employees (and periodic reminders) or mention in newsletters or other issuances would let employees know they can request job sharing. Information should include the name and telephone number of a contact point in the agency's personnel office. In addition, there should be a statement in agency vacancy announcements for full-time positions saying job sharing teams within the area of consideration may apply.

Who initiates the proposal for job sharing?

A proposal can come from a full-time employee who wants to reduce work hours, from a team of job sharers, or from a supervisor who wants to consider filling a vacancy with job sharers. When an employee's request for part-time cannot be accommodated because of the need for full-time coverage, job sharing may well be an option. The personnel office should be able to help the supervisor look at the pros and cons of various arrangements.

How can a current employee find a job sharing "partner"?

The first place to look is in the office (or a related office) where the employee works to see if another employee is interested. The contact point in the agency's personnel office may also be keeping a list of employees who want to reduce their work hours. Employees often conduct their own search by contacting organizations and placing ads. An agency may post a vacancy announcement to let employees know of the job sharing opportunity, but competition under agency merit promotion procedures is generally not required when an employee moves to a position with a different work schedule as long as the positions are at the same or lower grade level and have no more promotion potential. When a current employee is already available, an agency may want to fill the other half of the job with an outside candidate located through open competitive examining or under one of the special noncompetitive appointing authorities.

Employees in certain metropolitan areas may be able to find job sharing partners--and agencies can find current and former employees for part-time and job shared positions--through an OPM pilot project, The OPM Connection. OPM area offices (listed in the Government section of local telephone directories) can provide more information about the location and operation of the pilot projects. The fact sheet on page 20 describes the pilot project.

What are the characteristics of successful job sharers?

The experience reported by employers of job sharing teams suggests that job sharers must be good communicators, be willing to consult and cooperate as members of a team rather than as competitors, be flexible, and have a strong commitment to the job and to making the job sharing arrangement work. They must have complementary skills, knowledge and abilities--and also compatible work styles.

Does the position description for a full-time job have to be modified for job sharers?

When two job sharers at the same grade level are jointly responsible for all the duties and responsibilities of the full-time position, there is no need to restructure the position. Each team member should have a copy of the original position description to which a statement has been attached to show that the incumbent is a job sharer jointly responsible for carrying out all the duties and responsibilities of the position.

When the job sharers will be individually responsible only for portions of the job, or when the job sharers are at different grade levels, separate position descriptions are required to reflect the actual duties and responsibilities of each employee. Each job sharer must have a position description that accurately reflects his or her duties and responsibilities.

*How are duties
allocated between
the two job sharers?*

The decision on whether job sharers should be jointly responsible for the entire position or only for separate functions depends on the job and the abilities of the job sharing team. To determine the arrangement for a particular job, the supervisor (with assistance from the personnel office, if needed) should examine the position description and decide which tasks will be shared, i.e., handled by whichever team member is on duty, and which will be assigned to a specific individual, based on skills and experience. For example, one sharer could have the lead on a particular project, caseload, or function with the other serving as back-up. In some cases, tasks will be divided between the sharers, but overall responsibility for the position will be shared.

How the position operates in terms of products, contacts, and deadlines will also influence the decision on how the duties and responsibilities will be shared and how the hours will be split.

At one end of the spectrum is a clean division of duties between two people who have little or no interaction with each other. At the other end, two people are jointly responsible for each and every responsibility and function. Most job sharing arrangements will probably fall somewhere in between with the job sharers individually responsible for certain aspects of the job and jointly responsible for others.

*How do job sharers
divide the work week?*

Specific work schedules depend on the nature of the job and the needs of the office and the job sharing team. Almost any reasonable arrangement is possible if it meets the needs of the supervisor and the job sharers. Scheduling should take advantage of the fact two people rather than one are filling the job; these possibilities include overlapping time, split shifts, or working in different locations at the same time. Work schedules for job sharers can be from 16 to 32 hours per week and can be varied in the same way as other part-time employees. The amount of scheduled overlap time depends on the needs of the particular position. Often positions where significant "debriefing" is necessary are those where an exchange of views and a fresh view in mid-stream contribute to a better work product. Appendix B describes several options for scheduling job sharers.

*Are job sharers
evaluated separately
or together?*

Each member of a job sharing team must have his or her own performance standards. These will be identical if the job sharers are jointly responsible for the entire position. Each job sharer must be evaluated separately although the evaluation will often be based on work to which both have contributed. To make the supervisor's job easier, it would be wise to build in a mechanism for determining the relative contributions of each job sharer.

What about space and equipment for job sharers?

In some agencies, the availability of space and equipment will be tight. Job sharers who use the same desk, telephone, computer, etc., will need to agree on the basics so they won't lose time searching for or rearranging items. (Agencies may choose to permit job sharing employees to work at home as part of the ongoing Flexiplace pilot project or under the agency's general authority to specify employee duty stations.)

How can job sharers make sure there is no gap in communications?

For job sharing to be truly successful, everyone with whom the job sharers have contact must be able to assume that any information given to one team member will reach the other. In other words, supervisors, co-workers, and clients expect to communicate with "the position" via the person on duty at the time. The job sharers must have a workable communication system which serves the purpose without detracting from their ability to get the work done. Appendix C gives suggestions for maintaining good communications.

What happens if...?

A supervisor may decide to authorize a job sharing arrangement on a trial basis. In any case, the decision to approve or to terminate an arrangement is at management's discretion. To preclude later misunderstandings, this point should be made clear before the job sharers begin work. In addition, it should be decided in advance what will be done if one partner is unable to maintain the agreed-upon schedule, goes on extended leave, resigns, or takes another job. If the "remaining" partner would be expected to work full-time until the other job sharer is replaced, this should be made clear at the beginning.

If it is necessary to end a particular job sharing arrangement, the agency may reassign one or both of the job sharers to other part-time positions or to other full-time positions. In a 1985 decision (774 F. 2D 475), the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled that RIF procedures were not appropriate for separating a job sharer when the agency wished to replace the job sharers with a full-time employee. The court said that a simple change in work schedule from part-time to full-time did not constitute a reorganization, one of the appropriate uses for RIF procedures.

See Appendices D and E on solving problems.

"When our office mission expanded, we were able to absorb the increased workload because the job sharers willingly worked up to 32 hours per week...at a regular hourly rate."

**Joan Williams, Inventory Management Specialist
Air Force Medical Logistics Office
Maryland**

May job sharing teams apply for vacancies announced under agency merit promotion programs?

Agencies may not refuse to accept applications from individuals solely because they are part of a job sharing team. Each job sharer must be evaluated individually to determine eligibility. If both are among the best qualified, they must be referred as a team to the selecting official. In situations where a job sharing arrangement would not be appropriate, the selecting official can select a single candidate from among the best qualified. (A member of a job sharing team may also apply as an individual and be considered on that basis.)

What are agency responsibilities for collective bargaining and labor management cooperation?

When job sharing programs are planned for organizations where employees are represented by a labor organization with exclusive recognition by law, agencies must notify the union and bargain in good faith on any negotiable proposals the union submits. Although not a replacement for collective bargaining, labor-management cooperation, i.e., discussion and informal understandings, could help agencies in the development of successful job sharing programs.

"Each of our job sharers comes out of a different background: one in community development and coalition building; the other in teaching and curriculum development. Their combined expertise greatly enhances what our small staff of public health nutritionists can offer."

**Patricia Daniels, Chief
Nutrition Services and Education Branch
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
Washington, DC**

"Our administrative office has only one position in each specialty. When someone is out for any length of time, we're hard pressed. Between them, our job sharing budget analysts had three babies in 3 years. Operations were not interrupted, however, because one job sharer took leave without pay, while the other worked full-time. Now they even share a space in the local day care center."

**Joe Lupia, Director
Military Personnel and Community Activities
New Cumberland Army Depot
Pennsylvania**

Appendix A: Additional Personnel Policies

See Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 340, Other than Full-time Employment, for a complete discussion of personnel policies relating to part-time employees.

Appointments and Other Personnel Actions

Appointment procedures for part-time employees (including job sharers) are the same as for comparable full-time employees. Agencies process individual personnel actions for each employee in a shared position; for example, a separate SF 50, Notification of Personnel Action, would be issued to appoint or promote each job sharer.

Service Credit

Part-time work is prorated in determining whether an employee meets the X-118 qualifications requirements. For example, a job sharing employee on a 20-hour per week schedule would earn 6 months of experience credit per year. Time should generally be figured on the basis of hours in pay status (excluding overtime) rather than scheduled hours in order to recognize the service of part-time employees who are frequently required to work additional straight-time hours.

A part-time employee receives a full year of service credit for each calendar year worked (regardless of tour of duty) for the purpose of computing service for RIF retention, retirement eligibility, career tenure, completion of probationary period, within-grade increases, leave accrual rate, and time-in-grade restrictions on advancement.

Retirement and Insurance

Retirement annuities are based on an employee's length of service and the highest annual basic pay received for any 3 consecutive years. Each year of part-time service counts as one full year toward the length of service required to qualify for retirement, but the annuity benefit is prorated to reflect the difference between full-time and part-time service. Under Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) rules, the entire benefit is prorated. For employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), only the portion of the benefit attributable to part-time service after April 6, 1986, is prorated.

A part-time employee is eligible for the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program. The actual amount of insurance for which an employee is eligible is based on annual salary. The minimum amount of basic insurance is \$10,000.

A part-time employee is eligible to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. The coverage provided for a part-time and full-time employee is the same, but the cost to a part-time employee covered by the Act is greater since a covered employee receives a prorated Government contribution to health insurance premiums according to the number of hours in the tour of duty during the pay period.

"We were unable to fill the medical officer positions when they were full-time. But, by using part-time (job sharing) physicians, we were able to maintain productivity in the clinic. If one physician is on leave, the other usually works more hours to cover their assigned patients."

**Col. Thanesseri Baskaran
Chief of Hospital Services
Patrick Air Force Base, Florida**

Appendix B: Scheduling Options for Job Sharers

Ideally, the supervisor and the job sharing team should jointly determine how the work week will be divided. While the needs of the office are paramount, a successful arrangement will obviously have to satisfy the employees as well. Several options are possible, including split days, and alternate days or weeks.

For example:

- One employee could work Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; the other, Thursday and Friday. The next week the team members could reverse so that each would work a total of 5 days per pay period. (Note that the number of hours worked by each team member may be the same or different, and the combined hours may total 40 hours or more or less.)
- Each sharer could work consecutive weeks, beginning on a Wednesday.
- One member of the team could work Monday, Tuesday; the other, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesday, both employees could work a full or half day, depending on the need for overlapping time. (A certain amount of overlap time may be necessary.)

When job sharers want to work on alternate weeks, certain scheduling requirements must be met. In order for a part-time employee to be regularly scheduled--and eligible to earn leave--he or she must have 1 hour of work scheduled in each week of the bi-weekly pay period. Also, a part-time employee may not be scheduled for more than 32 hours per week. Within these requirements, one job sharer could be scheduled for 32 hours in week A and 1 hour in week B. The other job sharer would be scheduled for 1 hour in week A and 32 hours in week B. The employees would have to take annual leave (or be granted leave without pay) for the 1 hour in the week he or she wanted to be "off." See FPM Chapter 340, section 1-4, for information on permitting part-time employees to work more than their scheduled hours. Job sharing on a 6-months-on, 6-months-off basis should be handled differently. In this situation the employees would be considered full-time and could be granted leave without pay at the agency's discretion.

The examples might give the impression that job sharers' time on the job must be mutually exclusive. While this may be true in most cases, employees can overlap some or all of the time, depending on the nature of the work and the availability of space and equipment.

Job sharing offers supervisors considerable flexibility in scheduling. Temporary rearrangement of hours does not require paperwork (see FPM Chapter 340, section 1-4), but consideration needs to be given to employee concerns such as child care or class schedules. Job sharing also allows the supervisor to match work schedules to workload peaks. For example, one job sharer could work an early morning tour and the other, a tour late in the day, with no coverage in the middle of the day. Further, since job sharers can often swap schedules to cover for each other's absences, the office has the benefit of a built-in backup system. (Advance arrangements should make clear the conditions under which one team member would be expected to work additional hours in the absence of the other and how work will be performed if one of the job sharers were to leave the position.)

Appendix C: Tips for Better Communication

New York State Department of Civil Service supervisors cited "good communication" as the most important element for successful job sharing. The following suggestions for assuring that nothing falls through the crack come from a variety of sources.

To keep each other informed, job sharers can:

- Use current computer technology such as electronic mail to leave messages;
- Make tape recordings instead of writing lengthy notes;
- Hold daily or weekly telephone conferences;
- Post responsibilities, assignments, dates, etc., on a wall chart visible to co-workers;
- Keep a telephone log to show caller, number, purpose, and date;
- Put an extra copy of all correspondence generated by each partner in a chronological file for daily review by the job sharer on duty;
- Copy any correspondence routed before both partners have seen it with a notation explaining its disposition;
- Use a special "hot" folder for items requiring immediate attention;
- Post the job sharers' work schedules for the benefit of co-workers and others;
- Be sure the names of both job sharers are on route slips, mailing lists, etc;
- Leave lists of work outstanding with suggested priorities for the incoming job sharer; and
- Schedule informal "end-of-tour" briefings so the supervisor will know the status of projects being handed off from one job sharer to the other.

"Our split level job sharing arrangement-Personnel Management Specialists GS-7 and GS-11--has a double benefit. We were able to retain an experienced staffer and also provide on-the-job training for the junior member of the team."

**Helene Fossum, Director
Staffing and Classification Division
Navy Finance Center
Cleveland, Ohio**

Appendix D: A Message to Job Sharers

The success of job sharing will be measured not by whether the arrangement creates "problems"--anything new is bound to--but by how well and how quickly you, the job sharers, resolve them to everyone's satisfaction. In the following excerpt from The Job Sharing Handbook,¹ a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization called "New Ways to Work" offers some practical advice.

Schedules

After a few weeks of working you may find that your schedule needs adjusting. Sometimes it is a matter of insufficient overlap time, but more often it is the realization that your chosen schedule does not conform as well as it could to the work flow. It may be that you are working more hours than you've contracted for because once you are at work you have difficulty leaving. This can be more a problem with self-discipline than with your schedule, but readjusting your work time can help.

Balance

After you have worked together for a few weeks you may experience a drift in your relationship. It may be that one of you is becoming the dominant partner--the person who always responds to an emergency situation, or stays late to finish up work, or comes in extra days to cope with unexpected crises. Sometimes one person naturally grows into a dominant role; sometimes one sharer seems always to be assigned to or volunteers for the glamour tasks, while the other provides support. These issues need to be discussed regularly so you and your partner can find solutions to the imbalance.

Communication

If messages from your partner and co-workers aren't getting through (notices of meetings are getting to you late, tasks are being done twice, and clients and coworkers are complaining that they have already explained that to your partner), you have communication problems--the kind that employers envision when they question whether people can share a job. Partners need to communicate every day by means of phone calls or taped messages, in addition to keeping logs and writing memos. In the early stages of sharing a job, there is no such thing as too much communication. As your work routine develops, you will train yourselves to communicate regularly and to maintain an appropriate level of written and verbal information exchange.

Independence

A supervisor complained that her job-sharing career counselors had a tendency to do everything together. To her that meant too much overlap and duplication of effort. New job-sharing employees, anxious to share equally and enjoying each other's company and support, experience difficulty in letting go of the need to be at every meeting and to participate in all major functions, or simply prefer working together and forget that this will limit what they are able to accomplish. A strong sense of positive identification with and commitment to your partner is beneficial during the job-negotiation stage, but these same feelings can become a liability if they inhibit your ability to perform your job and integrate independently into your new workplace. Don't become too much of a twosome. If you realize that in a number of instances you have performed work together that one of you could have done separately, or that you have missed opportunities to enlarge the scope of your job by working independently, think about ways you can share apart from one another.

¹ Reprinted from *The Job Sharing Handbook* © by Barney Olmstead and Suzanne Smith, with permission from Ten Need Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707.

Working in a Full-time World

Most of your peers will be full-time workers with little experience in working with less than full-time colleagues. You will provide them with their first chance to see how jobs normally available only on a full-time basis can be restructured and shared by two people. One of the things you will have to confront is the fact that people will tend to forget that you are not full-time. They will expect you to have the same amount of information input as full-time employees and to be available at the same hours as they are for meetings.

Even if they remember that you don't work full time, they are apt to feel that since you are in the office you can stay a little longer to finish a project or go to a meeting. At office functions like birthday or going-away parties, you both will be expected to attend. To counter such expectations, some sharers have tried to persuade their coworkers to think in terms of the position and reassure them that the position will be represented by at least one member of the team at professional and social functions. Occasionally, both of you will attend if it seems appropriate or if it's something you both want to do.

You have a lot more flexibility than full-timers are used to. There are two of you to call on in emergency situations--or one of you to substitute if a partner has a personal emergency and is unable to attend an important meeting or appointment. Thus, although you are part-timers, others will expect a higher degree of involvement from your position. You will have to adjust to this dimension, because it constitutes a real difference from traditional part-time or full-time work, and traditional expectations are no longer valid.

Solving Problems

From time to time, small wrinkles may appear in your work arrangement. If left unattended they will grow into problems. As we have emphasized again and again, communication is the key to success in job sharing. Difficulties will not automatically disappear--you must identify and deal with them. Keep meeting on a regular basis after the break-in period to talk about your working relationship. If this becomes part of your normal routine, small hitches in your partnership or in your relationship with others in the office can be ironed out before they become big problems. Here are a few classic misunderstandings that relate to job-sharing arrangements that you should watch for and avoid:

- A potential exists for friction between partners around decision making and task distribution. A sharer with an assertive personality or longer work history may make independent judgments in areas where a joint discussion should take place. Or one sharer may end up doing all the routine tasks. One may have a different perception of what it means to get the job done and thus work longer hours to finish or polish work which the other considers finished and satisfactory.
- Your co-workers' envy of your part-time schedule can grow into resentment. Many people would like to work part-time, but what stops them is the realization that they would be paid on a part-time basis. Remind your colleagues that they can work part-time, and have more free time if they can adjust their budget, the way you did.
- The stereotype of part-time employees as less serious workers who don't pull as much of the work load as full-timers do is widely held in the workplace. If you encounter it in a co-worker, remind him or her that you have contracted for a smaller part of the load, that you work part of a position and your partner works the other part.
- An imbalance in the relationship with a supervisor can negatively affect sharers' ability to work collaboratively as equals. An uneven relationship can develop when one sharer has formerly held the job full time, when partners change, or when one sharer gets along better with the manager. It can result in the dominant partner getting all the feedback and encouragement while the other remains in a shadow where it is difficult to be seen or to grow.

Appendix E: Hints for Supervisors

The New York State Civil Service instituted a job sharing program several years ago. Their publication, Part-time Schedules: A Guide for New York State Supervisors and Managers, has good advice--reprinted below with permission--for supervisors of job sharing teams.

Announcing the Arrangement

Many supervisors find it helpful to introduce the new schedule arrangement formally to staff, much as they might introduce a new employee. The announcement could:

- Express support for the arrangement.
- Define the employees' work schedule, the agreed-upon starting time and leaving time.
- Discuss the employees' assignments, responsibilities and the way they fit into unit goals.
- List steps planned to assure communication and coordination within the unit.
- Explain what effects, if any, the part-time or job-sharing arrangement will have on other schedules and assignments within the unit.
- Review the effects of part-time on employment issues and benefits, including that part-time means part-salary. (Reduced work hours are visible to co-workers; reduced benefits are not.)

Solving Problems

Once the part-time or job-sharing arrangement begins, the focus should be on evaluating decisions made in the planning stage to see where adjustments are needed. The checklist below is designed to help the supervisor follow up a few weeks after the arrangement begins and periodically thereafter.

• Problem Indicators

Coverage is inadequate during peak hours, mornings or late afternoons. Coverage is too heavy during slow periods.

There is not enough time to meet with the staff as a group.

Job sharers don't have time to coordinate.

It is hard to know who is in. Job sharers have been informally swapping time.

• Possible Solutions

Review work scheduling; determine if flow patterns should or could be changed. Arrange for coverage by a co-worker or subordinate; Modify part-time employees' work schedules.

Set a core time each week when all staff members are on the job.

Arrange schedules so job sharers have overlapping time. Consider more emphasis on written communications such as logs and memos.

Maintain a calendar with the employee's schedules. Have employees swap times only with your knowledge and approval.

Co-workers resent that the part-time employee leaves "early" and that, when answering the employee's telephone, they never know when to say he or she will be in.

Be sure the schedule is not leaving the work unit short of staff during busy hours; make necessary schedule adjustments. Explain that the employee is following the appropriate schedule. Remind co-workers that part-time employees receive only a percentage of full-time pay and accruals. Post the part-time employee's schedule in a visible place.

A co-worker complains about handling calls and problems when the part-time employee or job sharer is out.

Review the co-worker's decision on what needs to be handled immediately and what can wait for the part-time employee. Set guidelines in this area. Determine if the schedule arrangement (such as 2 workdays followed by 3 days off) is causing problems. Consider ways to distribute urgent matters more equitably. Consider that the absence of full-time employees from the office might be contributing to the problem. Change the part-time employee's schedule.

The part-time employee isn't taken seriously.

Convey by attitude, words and assignments that the employee is a valuable and respected part of the unit. Be sure people deal with the part-time employee on matters under his or her jurisdiction; don't let people go around the employee. See if anything in the employee's behavior is contributing to the image.

The employee feels left out of the mainstream of the unit's functions and feels uninformed on agency or office policy, procedures or happenings that full-time employees take for granted.

Be sure the employee works with other employees on projects or assignments. Look for patterns in meeting schedules, office communications and informal networking that isolate the employee. Make sure the part-time employee is properly oriented to the job, agency and people.

One job sharer appears to be pulling more weight than the other. Or, one appears to complete assignments too slowly. Or, one feels the other is getting the "better" assignments.

As with full-time employees, review job responsibilities and adjust assignments if necessary. Consider the individual's strengths and weaknesses to balance work assignments fairly. Be sure to reward and praise job sharers equally for equal performance. Encourage the job sharers to talk over their differences and recommend their own solutions.

"The private sector labs have no problem dealing with our job sharing chemists who monitor contract performance. Each of them is able to pick up where the other left off without any difficulty. This gives us better office coverage and allows for quicker responses to questions."

**Carol Wood, Chief
Quality Assurance Office
Environmental Services Center
Environmental Protection Agency
Boston**

Federal Personnel Manual System

FPM Letter 340-3

SUBJECT: Part-time Employment and Job Sharing

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of incorporation in FPM

Letter 340

RETAIN UNTIL SUPERSEDED

Washington, D. C. 20415

September 10, 1990

Heads of Departments and Independent Establishments:

1. Purpose

This letter transmits a copy of a new OPM publication, Job Sharing for Federal Employees (attachment 1) and also announces a pilot project on job sharing and part-time employment that OPM will conduct in several cities.

2. Background

a. As the labor market becomes more competitive, public and private sector employers are recognizing the value of alternative work arrangements in recruiting and retaining quality employees. The need to balance work and family responsibilities has led many employees to seek flexibility in their work schedules.

b. Two widely-reported trends explain why this issue has become of increasing concern to employees.

- The percentage of working mothers has risen dramatically and is expected to continue. In 1976, 31 percent of mothers with children under age 1 were in the labor force; in 1987, 51 percent of these mothers worked.
- The number of Americans 65 years and older has grown twice as fast as any other group. A survey reports that 1 in every 4 workers over 30 provides some type of care to an aging parent or other relative.

c. The Merit Systems Protection Board recently reported on the reasons Federal employees gave for leaving the Government. According to MSPB, 14 percent of those surveyed left because of the desire to pursue nonwork interests or continue education; difficulties in getting adequate day care; personal health problems; or unsatisfactory working hours or shifts. The availability of part-time work schedules might have made it possible for at least a portion of these employees to remain with the Government.

3. Job Sharing

Job sharing is a way for management to offer part-time work schedules in positions where full-time coverage is needed. The attached publication, Job Sharing for Federal Employees, gives detailed information on how to set up a job sharing arrangement and make it work effectively. (A future Rider Bulletin will offer agencies the opportunity to purchase additional copies of the publication.)

4. Merit Promotion Vacancy Announcements

When filling full-time vacancies, agencies must accept applications from job sharing teams within the area of consideration. Each member of the team must be among the best qualified in order for the team to be selected. In a situation where job sharing would not be workable, the selecting official is free to select a single individual from the best-qualified list. Many agency vacancy announcements for full-time positions already include a statement that job sharers may apply; OPM strongly encourages this practice.

5. Publicizing the Program

To publicize job sharing and part-time employment, agencies may use the OPM fact sheet (attachment 2), reproduced locally or as the basis of an agency-developed issuance. Agency material on part-time employment and job sharing should identify a contact point(s) in the personnel office so that employees and supervisors know where to go to for more information.

6. Monitoring

a. OPM wants to hear from agencies about their experiences with job sharing. Comments should be included in the semi-annual reports on part-time employment agencies are required by law to submit to OPM. Reporting requirements are described in FPM Chapter 340, subsection 1-3(e).

b. OPM will be analyzing workforce statistics to monitor the employment of job sharers. (FPM letter 296-109, dated March 22, 1990, requires agencies to identify job sharers with special codes and remarks on the SF 50, Notification of Personnel Action.)

7. "The OPM Connection": Pilot Projects in Washington, DC; Boston; Chicago and Los Angeles


a. Beginning in October 1990, in the cities named above, Federal employees with career-conditional and career appointments (and former employees with reinstatement eligibility) can register their interest in part-time and job-shared positions by signing up for "The OPM Connection." Local OPM area offices in these cities will have application forms and additional information.

b. When filling part-time or full-time (job-shared) vacancies, agencies can request the names of candidates registered in "The OPM Connection." To use the automated system, each agency personnel office must have an identification number. Many offices already have an ID number because they are using OPM's Automated Applicant Referral System (AARS) to recruit candidates for Engineers, Physical Scientists, and Mathematicians (ES&M). The same ID code is good for both the ES&M program and "The OPM Connection." To obtain an ID number, personnel offices in the above cities should submit a request form (attachment 3). We will send instructions for using the system along with the new ID number. (Current AARS users will also receive instructions for accessing "The OPM Connection.")

c. At the employee's option, "The OPM Connection" can match up registrants who are looking for job sharing partners. After receiving a list of names, employees can contact each other and decide whether to form a job sharing team in order to apply for full-time vacancies announced by agencies.

8. Conclusion

OPM has devoted substantial resources to this renewed effort to promote flexible scheduling. We urge agencies to participate by establishing additional part-time and job-shared positions and by informing employees of the option to work less than full-time.


Constance Berry Newman
Director

Attachments

Don't Go Away... Go Part-time!

Is juggling work and family responsibilities getting you down?

Do health problems make it hard for you to work a 40-hour week?

Could you go back to school if there were extra hours in the day?

At this time in your life, are some non-work hours more valuable than \$\$\$?

Would a part-time work schedule help you balance competing demands?

What is a permanent part-time employee?

A permanent part-time employee has a career or career-conditional appointment (or a permanent appointment in the excepted service), is eligible for fringe benefits, and works between 16 and 32 hours each week on a prearranged schedule. For employees who cannot continue to work full-time, part-time is a way to maintain a career and income.

What is job sharing?

Job sharing is a form of part-time employment in which the schedules of two part-time employees are arranged to cover the duties of a single full-time position. For example, job sharers can each work a portion of the day or week.

What positions and grade levels are suitable for part-time employment and/or job sharing?

Part-time employees are currently working in a wide variety of positions at all levels. (Job sharers, though fewer in number, also work in clerical, technical, administrative and professional jobs.) Any job may be filled by a part-time employee or a team of job sharers when the arrangement meets the needs of the office--and the employee(s).

Why do employers offer job sharing?

In addition to providing the opportunity for employees to work part-time in positions where full-time coverage is required, job sharing provides management with extra flexibility: team members may have different strengths; they may be able to fill in for each other's absences; and both may be able to work extra hours when there are unexpected workload surges.

How can a full-time employee change to a part-time or job sharing schedule?

Although procedures vary from agency to agency, the first step is for an employee to discuss the idea with his or her immediate supervisor. If a part-time schedule is not appropriate for the employee's current position, job sharing may be feasible. Agency personnel offices may be able to help the employee identify other positions in the agency which could be filled on a part-time or job-shared basis.

For more information, call your agency contact:

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Do personnel rules treat part-time and job-sharing employees in the same way? Although the job sharing arrangement adds an extra dimension, job-sharers are part-time employees and are treated as such. In the following information, the term *part-time employee* also includes job sharers.

Are fringe benefits available? Part-time employees under permanent appointments are eligible for the same benefits as full-time employees: leave, retirement, health and life insurance coverage. Part-time and job-sharing employees who participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program receive the same coverage as full-time employees but pay a greater percentage of the premium because the Government's share is prorated based on the number of hours the employee is scheduled to work each week. For example, an employee on a 20-hour per week schedule receives one-half the Government contribution toward the premium.

What about pay, leave, and holidays? Gross pay is computed by multiplying the employee's hourly rate by the number of hours worked during the pay period. Overtime rates apply only to the hours in excess of 8 in a day or 40 in a week. Non-overtime hours above those normally scheduled are paid at the basic rate.

Annual leave is earned according to the number of hours worked per pay period. An employee with less than 3 years of service earns 1 hour of leave for each 20 hours worked; with from 3 to 14 years of service, the employee earns 1 hour for each 13 worked; and with 15 or more years of service earns 1 hour for each 10 hours worked. All part-time and job sharing employees earn 1 hour of sick leave for each 20 hours worked and are also eligible for other kinds of leave.

If a holiday falls on a day the employee normally works, the employee is paid for the number of hours he or she was scheduled to work.

Can part-time employees compete for other positions? Part-time employees are eligible to compete for part-time as well as full-time positions in accordance with their agency's merit promotion plan. Part-time employees who are job sharing may apply and be considered as a team, but each must be among the best qualified in order for the team to be selected. (An employee may apply individually and as a member of a job sharing team.)

Is there any flexibility in work scheduling?

To meet the needs of the office or the employee, an agency may temporarily or permanently change the hours of a part-time employee. Although part-timers must have schedules within the 16 to 32 hour-per-week range, they may work more than 32 hours for up to two consecutive pay periods.

How is service credited?

A part-time employee earns a full year of service credit for each calendar year worked (regardless of schedule) for the purpose of computing dates for retirement eligibility, career tenure, completion of probationary period, within-grade pay increases, change in leave category, and time-in-grade restrictions on advancement. Part-time work is prorated for determining qualifications; for example, an employee who works 20 hours per week would have 6 months of experience at the end of 12 months.

Does part-time service affect retirement annuities? Each year of part-time service counts as 1 full year toward the length of service requirement but is prorated for purposes of the annuity calculation. Under Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) rules, all part-time service is prorated. For employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), part-time service performed on or after April 7, 1986, is prorated.

How are performance ratings handled? Part-time employees are rated on their performance in the same way as full-time employees. Depending on the arrangement, job-sharing employees may have the same or different performance standards.

What rights exist for adverse actions and RIF? Part-time employees have the same rights as full-time employees when disciplinary action is taken against them. The reduction in scheduled hours is not subject to adverse action procedures. When a reduction in force, part-time and job sharing employees have assignment rights only to full-time positions. (Similarly, full-time employees have assignment rights only to full-time positions.)

For more information.
Manual (FPM) Chapter 1
series--available in
offices.

Part-time Employment Job Sharing

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The OPM Connection

☆ Boston ☆ Chicago ☆ Los Angeles ☆ Washington, DC ☆

What is The OPM Connection?

It's a brand new pilot program starting this fall in Washington, DC; Boston; Chicago; and Los Angeles. The idea is to match Federal employees who want to work part-time with Federal agencies trying to fill part-time and shared jobs. *The OPM Connection* is actually a computerized list of current and former Federal employees who have registered their interest in working part-time or as job sharers. Federal agencies can use a touch tone phone to call *The OPM Connection* and request names of registrants by series and grade. OPM will provide the names by fax machine. Agencies will then contact the individuals to determine their qualifications and availability for positions advertised under merit promotion.

Who is Eligible?

Because *The OPM Connection* is a pilot project, at this time only Federal employees in the competitive service--and those with reinstatement eligibility--who live in the commuting areas for Washington, DC; Boston; Chicago; and Los Angeles are eligible. If the project is successful, further expansion is possible.

What Else Does It Offer?

Employees interested in job sharing (generally defined as two employees dividing the work of a full-time position), can ask *The OPM Connection* for the names of potential job sharing partners. In the same way as a carpool matching system works, the employees then contact each other and decide whether to form a job sharing team to apply for full-time vacancies. (Although teams within the area of consideration can apply for full-time vacancies, the decision to use job sharers is up to the selecting official.)

How do Employees Sign Up?

Call the local OPM office (telephone numbers below) to request a registration form for *The OPM Connection*. You may register for up to three series/grades for which you believe you qualify. After you mail the registration form back to the address given, you'll get a notice showing that you are in the system and, if you requested it, a list of potential job sharing partners. An agency that receives your name from *The OPM Connection* will contact you directly to discuss specific positions.

For more information, call the local OPM offices in:

Boston	(617) 565-5910
Chicago	(312) 353-6192
Los Angeles	(213) 894-5187
Washington, DC	(202) 606-2700

"It took a while to shake out; both employees were first-rate performers, but their personalities and styles were totally different. They learned to accommodate each other's strengths and weaknesses. Now, they're seen as interchangeable by me as well as the support staff who look to them for guidance."

**Charles Heath, Director
Petroleum Supply Division
Department of Energy
Washington, DC**